

REMARKS

Claims 23-32 are now pending in the application, with claims 23, 31 and 32 being the independent claims. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

Initially, Applicant thanks the Examiner for the telephonic interview with Applicant's attorney conducted on September 12, 2005, as well as the follow-up telephone call with Applicant's attorney on October 21, 2005. During the course of those telephone calls, the Examiner indicated that the claim amendments set forth above would cause the application to be allowable over the applied art. However, the Examiner also indicated that a further search would be conducted before making any determination about allowability.

Specifically, the Examiner agreed that the present claim language about:

receiving a reply that indicates at least one of: (i) no current email message receiving capability or (ii) no current email message handling capability; and

alerting the user, prior to a user sending an e-mail message, that the recipient is not currently available at the designated e-mail address

is not disclosed or suggested by the applied art.

As discussed during the telephone calls, the present invention concerns systems, methods and techniques for reporting and/or retrieving statuses regarding current email message receiving and handling capability. More specifically, the present invention may be utilized to alert a user, *before an e-mail message is sent*, when an intended recipient of the e-mail message is not currently available at the designated e-mail address. Such a situation might arise, for example, where the intended recipient has an e-mail address that is no longer valid or where the intended recipient has indicated that he or she is not currently available, e.g., by setting an automatic out-of-office message to be sent in reply to all incoming e-mail messages.

As also discussed, Friskel, the primary prior-art reference applied in the Office Action, only appears to concern a system in which the recipient of an e-mail message is notified if the sender of the e-mail message is available for *real-time messaging*. See, e.g., column 4 lines 20-30 of Friskel.

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